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ABSTRACT

An alternative to the meager budgets which complicate the correctional educator's task is proposed in this bulletin. A correctional school district organization can be developed to support viable education programs for individuals within the penal system. The six states of Texas, Connecticut, Illinois, New Jersey, Arkansas, and Ohio already have operating correctional school districts. Key aspects and elements of the special district concept are discussed. Positive aspects of the organizational concept are considered to be that priorities can be readily established and assigned to educational programs and services in correctional institutions, that legally constituted educational units have broader access to state and federal sources of funds, that funding which will permit full programming encourages long-range planning and staffing continuity, and that the status of prison of educational programs can be advanced in relation to other prison programs. A profile of the Connecticut Correctional School District indicates a trend toward more centralized operation and a 50 percent enrollment of inmates in educational and training programs. Sources of further information about correctional school districts are suggested. (MKM)

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Commission on Correctional Facilities and Services

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December, 1973 Coordination Bulletin #22

CLEARINGHOUSE FOR OFFENDER LITERACY PROGRAMS

Potential of Correctional School District Organizations

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
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Introduction

In an increasingly complex technological society the need for a basic education cannot be overemphasized. If a person is to be gainfully employed within the limits of a "straight" society, he must have, as a minimum, a "survival" reading ability coupled with whatever other skills are necessary to cope successfully.

Educators are facing an increasingly difficult task with alienated individuals who for some reason or other have been "turned off" with schools and, consequently, seek alternative means of achieving what they feel are the essentials of life. Often these individuals turn to criminal activity and, in due course, are apprehended, tried, convicted, and sentenced to probation supervision or confinement.

The correctional educator's task is complicated by the very nature of the individual with whom he must deal. The offender is often alienated socially, highly hostile, previously unsuccessful in school, a remedial problem in most academic areas, of average intelligence and usually anti-teacher as a result of his previous encounters with education. With these "givens" it is at best a difficult situation for correctional educators to "get through" to these individuals. The dilemma is further accentuated by slim budgets, poor physical plants, thin staffs and, in many instances, almost non-existent learning material budgets provided for institutional education programs. With these limitations, which are real and in many cases the best that can be done under the circumstances, it is little wonder that meager progress is made with the great majority of individuals in our correctional institutions.

This brochure has been developed to point up a "delivery" alternative which is functioning in a limited number of states at this time. The alternative gives the correctional educator an opportunity to develop educational priorities and submit them to a "school board" whose function is solely that of supporting viable education programs for individuals within the penal system. Programs which tend to be successful with correctional institution populations are often based on models other than those which replicate the traditional schools in our nation, i.e., are tailored to the difficult setting in corrections. This alternative can permit mobilization of resources for purposes of pursuing more appropriate models which can be honed to whatever educational priorities deserve consideration within a given correctional system or agency.

Establishment of a Correctional School District

The formation of correctional school districts came in response to some of the difficulties inherent in a situation where an education program had to lobby and compete with other important programs for funds within the institutional structure. In many instances, the educational program, especially for adult basic education (literacy and primary education learning) did not fare well.

The legislation necessary for establishment of a correctional school district usually creates a separate board of education, a superintendent, provisions for a central program, staff, and a means of securing funds to support the program. Other key aspects and elements of the special district concept include:

(a) A pattern of funding consistent with other educational programs and institutions within the state. (This feature assures adequate state funds on some formula basis and also permits some security in planning for programs and staff).

(b) The opening up of all normal avenues to federal and state school funds. (Whereas only certain funds were available through the old pattern, the advent of legal school district status makes all sources immediately available, though granting procedures may take some time to work through).

(c) Enrichment through the diverse makeup of the correctional board of education. (This is one of the structural details usually embodied in the legislation. At least one state has a multi-disciplinary board organization, reflecting a desirable and broad range of expertise. Other legislatures have limited board membership to appointments from the state correctional system and the state education system, offering intimate knowledge of both the correctional field and the educational process -- the two relevant systems for optimum planning and collaboration).

(d) Possible inclusion of in-service training as a "must" in the school codes. (Provisions can be made (i) permitting the school district to enter into contracts with other educational units for specialized training, e.g., advanced vocational instruction, (ii) teacher compensation can be put on a par with other state agencies, and (iii) there can be provisions for closing schools during teachers' institutes).

(e) Development and enforcement of certification standards. (In one instance, however, the adult correctional school board has been wary of certification, viewing it as a possible restrictive force rather than a quality control technique).

(f) Upgrading educational facilities through compliance with state codes for schools. (This means that provision for improving present facilities or construction of new ones must be considered).

(g) Facilitation of transcript problems concerning credits and diplomas. (The school district concept permits giving a transcript which does not bear an indication of having attended school in a correctional institution).

(h) Creation of courses of study appropriate to the specific inmate population.

(The adoption of such programs would also mean support from a control staff, including teaching staff, materials and necessary time and space for the attainment of study objectives).

States Which Have Operational Correctional School Districts

At this point, six states (most being large urban states with a combined total population of more than 44 million) are actually operating correctional school districts. These are, with dates and sources of authority:

State	Date Established	Means*
1. Texas	March, 1969	Specific Legislation
2. Connecticut	June, 1969	Specific Legislation
3. Illinois	July, 1972	Specific Legislation
4. New Jersey	December, 1972	Specific Legislation
5. Arkansas	March, 1973	Specific Legislation
6. Ohio	April, 1973	Action by State Board of Education under prior permissive legislation

Other states which are reported to be considering the function and potential of a correctional school district are (i) New York, (ii) Massachusetts, (iii) Maryland, (iv) Arizona, and (v) Wisconsin.

Positive Aspects of the Special School District Organizational Pattern

Following is a list of positive points which have been gleaned from information made available to the ABA Clearinghouse for Offender Literacy Programs. They are presented in random order and without any ranking in value or importance. What may be considered a positive aspect in one plan may very well be considered neutral or negative in another. These points represent condensation of data derived from a significant volume of written material, interviews and phone calls.

1. Priorities can be readily established and assigned to educational programs and services in correctional institutions.

2. This legally constituted educational unit has broader access to state and federal sources of funds.

3. Funding which will permit full programming encourages long-range planning and staffing continuity.

4. Status of prison educational programs can be advanced in relation to other prison programs. Status of teachers, too, is brought to a par with other educators within the state.

*See Correctional Law Bulletin No. 4, ABA Resource Center or Correctional Law and Legal Services, for statutory citations and texts of correctional school district legislation.

5. Certification standards for prison schools and programs can be established and controlled by Board.

6. Better efficiency can be achieved in providing educational support services to institutions within a state.

7. More flexibility and efficiency is available in encouraging program replication from one site to another.

8. Development of alternative models for educational programs can be facilitated.

9. The setting can be improved for implementation of prison industries, work release and placement services. For instance, Connecticut has placed prison industries under direction of the superintendent of the correctional school district.

10. The special board of education can serve as a powerful intermediary and spokesman with the state legislature and state superintendent of schools.

11. This unit of organization more readily lends itself to accreditation and evaluation.

Some Cautionary Points to Consider

In discussions with individuals who are presently involved and responsible for this type of organization, a few cautionary points were consistently raised which should receive consideration.

1. The entire plan should involve the state superintendent of public instruction from the very beginning. If this is not accomplished, there is a danger of that individual or his department being threatened and placed in a position of conflict or nonsupport.

2. To the extent possible, funding should be developed on a "no strings attached" basis. To encumber a system with unrealistic restrictions that would not permit the creative approaches which are so necessary in correctional education could be harmful.

3. The entire operation should be developed around clearcut objectives without undue emphasis on "public relations" mileage. A solid operation involves an immense amount of planning and, if achieved, will most assuredly receive beneficial publicity.

4. Clear lines of authority and accountability should be drawn for the individual in charge of the state correctional educational program. Confusion and conflict may result if there are areas which are unclear in relation to authority or leadership, particularly when crisis situations develop.

Adult or Juvenile Special District or Both?

One possibility which exists when moving toward the correctional school system within a state is to opt for change within only one phase, e.g., the adult authority (if it is a separate agency) or the adult component (if part of an integrated system).

This approach may be appropriate in a given state since many juvenile institutions are presently covered under existing school codes. The adult programs, then, would be targeted for the initial legislation. This special school district would be aimed at improvement of adult basic education, vocational, post-high school and work-release programs.

Careful consideration should be given to the legislative package to insure that the change will be a positive one and not limiting nor restrictive in relation to present patterns. A quick reference chart is provided which was developed from preliminary research of the Clearinghouse for Offender Literacy Programs. It is intended to be indicative of broad parameters rather than specifics and follows on page seven.

Progress in Connecticut: Profile of an Operating Correctional School District

Connecticut has moved steadily toward a centralized operation since the inception of its correctional school district in June, 1969.

With the appointment of a Superintendent of Schools for the district, rapid strides have been taken to improve educational practices throughout the system. For instance, during the 1972-73 school year, nearly fifty percent of the daily population of inmates were enrolled in education and training programs. Of that number 350 received their high school diplomas.

In the realm of adult basic education, some 700 inmates were enrolled and completed that segment of the program. The remainder continue in their present courses or are enrolled in college, work-release or apprenticeship programs.

Incentives such as provision for limited pay and sentence reductions were employed to some extent to motivate inmates to enroll and continue with educational commitment. Use of volunteer reading (literacy) tutors was also employed in some situations with success. Other innovations which were encouraged by the superintendent and his staff were the use of programmed instruction and classes in English as a second language. Co-education was also instituted as a program which reflected the normalized relationships that occur in the "outside" world.

In the vocational area, occupations which were capable of accepting new workers were those which were stressed. Great care was taken to provide job training for positions which were available in the real world.

It should also be noted that great use is made of media in the training of individuals in various programs. The "plusses" are numerous including advantages such as having the learner "in control" of program material, provision for "non-verbal" learning styles and utilization of excellence in the presentation mode. One program which is quite unique is the "visiting artist" project. In this effort, practicing artists in the areas of creative writing, music, art and drama visit institutions to give the inmates a "hands on" reaction to the various art forms. Opportunities for personal interchange transmit the true flavor of the artists' endeavors to interested individuals. Its philosophy, though quite simple, is based on appreciation through involvement.

Connecticut has three full-time principals for the 11 campuses with a support staff which is composed of a superintendent, an assistant director of education, one psychological testor, a central librarian, three full-time librarians and a supervisor in the area of special education.

The teaching staff consists of 40 academic teachers and 24 vocational teachers.

The 1972-73 budget was $1,014,742.00 with the bulk of the funds coming from state revenues.

Contacts for Further Information

It is suggested that interested administrators and agencies contact one or more of the following individuals. They reflect different points of view and perspectives and some are involved in more than a single aspect of the organizational change involved in establishment of a correctional school district.

For those studying or pursuing this kind of reorganization in their state or system, it would be well to invite a knowledgeable individual to consult on specifics that would affect their system's operation.

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Mr. Edmund Gubbins
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The Clearinghouse for Offender Literacy Programs is building a data bank of descriptive materials, performance reports, and statistics on the operation of correctional school district programs. It would welcome further inquiries from individuals or groups interested in this subject.

PRO'S AND CON'S OF CORRECTIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICTS

	Access to State Ed. Funds	Local Funding	Independent School Board	Access to All USOE Funds	Access to Other Federal Funds	Access to State Support Services	Equality in Bargaining for Funds (Budget)	Control of Staff Certification	Adaptivity to Correctional Education Needs	Internal Priority Conflict	Transferable Credit-No Correction Label
Traditional Institution Funding	–	–	–	–	+ / –	–	–	–	–	+	+ / –
Institution Incorporated In Local School District	+	+	+ / –	+	+ / –	+	+	–	–	–	+
Independent Correctional School District	+	–	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	–	+

\+ possesses characteristic or possibility

– does not possess characteristic or possibility

+/– may or may not possess characteristic or possibility of being implemented depending upon other considerations such as administrator's attitude toward this specific point

Other Clearinghouse publications are available. We would be happy to provide them upon request:

1. American Bar Association Commission on Correctional Facilities and Services, Coordination Bulletin #20 - "Project Brief" - August 1973.
2. ABA Commission on Correctional Facilities and Services, Coordination Bulletin #21 - "Summary of 50-State Preliminary Survey on Basic Literacy Training, Testing, and School District Organization in State Correctional Systems" - October, 1973
3. ABA Commission on Correctional Facilities and Services, Coordination Bulletin # 22 - "Potential of Correctional School District Organizations" - December, 1973
4. ABA Commission on Correctional Facilities and Services, Brochure - "Reading in Prisons: Need. . ." - December, 1973

Two more publications are available concerning educational emphasis in correctional institutions:

1. ABA Resource Center on Correctional Law and Legal Services and the American Association of Community and Junior Colleges, "Legislating for Correctional Line Officer Education and Training" - 1973.

2. ABA Resource Center on Correctional Law and Legal Services, Law Reform Bulletin #4 - " Correctional School District Legislation and Programs" - 1973.

American Bar Association's Commission on Correctional Facilities and Services programs are as follows:

Resource Center on Correctional Law and Legal Services
Volunteer Parole Aide Program for Young Lawyers
National Clearinghouse for Offender Employment Restrictions
National Clearinghouse for Offender Literacy Programs
National Pretrial Intervention Service Center
Statewide Jail Standards and Inspection Systems Project
Correctional Economic Center
State and Local Bar Activation Program for Correctional Reform
Correctional Officers Education Program

For information, please write:

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